

Case Study on India's Largest Right to Information Awareness Campaign at Surat, Gujarat



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RTI Background

Right to Information (RTI) is crucial for better governance in any country. With the help of proper information about government we can know whether government is working in right direction or not, whether it is working effectively or not. Till date more than 90 countries enacted laws on Right to Information/Freedom of Information. In India movement on RTI started in 90s by Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghathan (MKSS) in Rajasthan. In year 2002 Freedom of Information Act was passed but it did not come into force because of shortcomings in it. Finally, India got his RTI Act in year 2005.

RTI Campaign in India

More than a decade has passed but still majority of citizen are not aware about this powerful legislation. Many organizations/ngos/activists have been trying hard to make people aware about this act by way of legal awareness programmes, seminars, workshops, short films, distributing pamphlets etc. Some organizations are running Helplines to help people in RTI matters. Mahiti Adhikar Gujarat Pehal (MAGP) based at Ahmedabad, Gujarat¹ is one of the prominent helpline in the Gujarat and having their RTI Wheels which goes to different parts of the city and other nearby states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan for campaigning. It also went to Jammu & Kashmir for campaigning. J & K is having their separate laws on RTI of year 2009.

RTI Helpline Surat – 93766 33301

RTI Helpline started by Mr. Ajay Jangid, businessman turned fulltime RTI Activists² in year 2010. He has conducted more than 300 seminars on RTI across the Gujarat. Every year around 20 to 25 thousand people are benefitted from his seminar. He receives around 8 to 10 calls per day on RTI matter. After attending his seminar on RTI, many have become fulltime activists and helping Mr Ajay in his mission to spread RTI laws.

¹ <http://mahitiadhikar.blogspot.in/>

² <https://www.facebook.com/Ajayjangid2004/>

RTI Campaign at National Book Fair, Surat

Looking at low awareness on RTI law, Mr Ajay came up with a unique idea of setting up a RTI Stall at National Book Fair, Surat, Gujarat in the year 2014. National Book Fair being organised for last sixteen years where thousands of people visit the same. RTI Stall helps to reach large number of people in five to eight days of book fair. **Table 1** shows gradual progress of RTI Stall and its achievement. From year 2016, campaign with different RTI slogan placard is carried on. This year in 2017 King of Democracy campaign was initiated and it received great response from the people. Thousands of people got the photo clicked and uploaded on social media to sensitize the RTI movement³. This year Nukkad Natak also planned by Auro University Legal Aid Community Development Cell, Surat with the help of RTI Stall. Nowhere in India this kind of RTI campaign done before.

Table 1 :- RTI Stall Statistics

Particular	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 #
No. of Visitors \$	50,000	60,000	2,00,000	3,00,000	4,00,000
No. of Volunteers	5	40	150	200 \$	300
RTI Pamphlet distributed	5,000	10,000	27,000	40,000	50,000
Small RTI Booklet*	-	2,000	6,000	6,000	10,000
RTI Guidance Booklet for Citizen*	-	-	1,500	3,000	5,000
RTI Guidance Booklet for Public Information Officer/Appellate Authority*	-	-	1,000	500	1,000
RTI CDs*	-	-	50	500	

*Sold on cost basis, \$ Approximate, # Projection

Way forward for RTI campaign India

RTI Helpline has shown us the way for unique campaign to make people aware about RTI law. RTI Helpline Surat can also plan this type of stall at various public events in other

³ <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kalpeshkumargupta/>

districts and across the country. It can collaborate with other organizations to plan this kind of campaign.

References

<http://mahitiadhikar.blogspot.in/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Ajayjangid2004/>



RTI Awareness Stall at National Book Fair, Surat





Nukkad Natak by Auro University Law Students at RTI Stall





We are King of Our Democracy Campaign

For more photos please click on <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kalpeshkumargupta/>

Video Link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cx44-p7zzcQ&t=30s>